

W. Ambrose Heath

THE LAY-MAN'S MAGAZINE.

THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND—AND THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF."

Number 13] MARTINSBURGH, FEBRUARY 8, 1816. [Volume 1

It is customary at the commencement of a new year, for tokens of affection to pass from friend to friend.—The Rev. Mr. Wilmer, of Alexandria, has fallen upon the happy expedient of improving this custom to the good of souls. On New-Years day he is in the habit of transmitting to each of his parishioners a circular letter containing pastoral counsel. The following is his circular for the new year just elapsed.—In presenting it to our readers we believe we shall yield them pleasure as well as instruction.

A NEW YEAR'S GIFT.

ALEXANDRIA, Jan. 1st, 1816.

DEARLY BELOVED:

Permit me to give you the salutations of the season, and to suggest to you some of the reflections which the occasion naturally inspires. It occurred to me that a few thoughts presented in this form, might under the blessing of God, be attended with some salutary and abiding effect.

The commencement of a New Year, is an event calculated to awaken very serious considerations. In these solemn memorials of time, we are peculiarly reminded of its rapid flight, and of our own progress to eternity. At such a season we seem to stand on some high eminence, whence we can discern with peculiar distinctness, that ever rolling stream which has borne us thus far, and which, receiving at this crisis, the accession of another year, thence bends its awful course to eternity. We look back and perceive, that many who embarked with us in this voyage, have already been wrecked by death: and we

feel, that, amidst the dangers which on every side expand to our view, we who remain, must also shortly go "whence we shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death."

Life while it is thus passing away leaves us a sense of its importance.—

"Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge:"

But the close of a year gives to time a more solemn voice, and makes it speak the language of eternity. It tells us of the great purposes for which we were born, and calls us to prepare for that account we must render, when "time shall be no more."

Let us consider how our years have hitherto been employed, and whether we have been indeed fulfilling the great ends for which we were brought into being. It is only by a faithful discharge of the duties thus required of us, that we can hope to sustain the manifestation of that great day.—These duties as prescribed in the gospel tell us what we ought to be, in public; in our social capacities; in our families, and in our hearts.

1. God requires us to render in public, our acknowledgement of his goodness, his greatness and power, and especially in the wonderful plan of redemption by our Saviour Jesus Christ; to confess our sins, to implore his pardon, and to obtain his grace enabling us to love him more and to serve him better. In public worship we profess these sentiments, and by our example encourage others to do likewise. On God's part, he promises to meet us there, to bless us and to do us good. In the prayers of the Church we draw nigh to him, and he draws nigh to us. He has decreed

also that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."—As therefore he has annexed so great blessings to a *devout* attendance upon his public worship, we are wanting in a due regard to our own interests as well as in gratitude to him, when we *willingly* absent ourselves from the public services. We are guilty also of violating an express command, and of lending a pernicious example to others. Let no slight pretexts, then, I beseech you, keep you from Church. Let nothing hinder you, but what you may lawfully plead at the bar of judgment. When God condescends to come into an earthly temple to dispense to you his everlasting blessings, let him not find your seat empty; lest when he comes to judge the world, he should punish you for your neglect, by banishment from that temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. "For-sake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

It is essential to our proper observance of public worship, that we keep those ordinances which God has positively instituted. Among these there is none more solemnly enjoined or attended with greater benefits or more easily observed than the sacrament of our Lord's supper. They who believe in its obligation, can urge no excuse which does not aggravate the guilt of staying away. If it be our sinfulness, this is rather an aggravation of the fault than an excuse; because sin is not worth having, and we have only to throw it away, and lo! every barrier is removed. If we plead our unworthiness, this is no excuse, provided we lament it, and endeavor to repair it. In that case the more unworthy we are in our own estimation, the more worthy are we in the sight of God. All that he requires is, that we come with penitent, believing and charitable hearts. Then, though

our sins are as scarlet, he has promised to make them white as snow.—Clothed with that wedding garment which he has provided, we may come with confidence, with comfort and with joy, to this sacred feast. Cast away then every excuse, and be induced by the mercies of God displayed in these symbols of his body and blood, to devote yourself to him in so reasonable and acceptable a service.

2. If we are the true disciples of Christ, we shall display his religion in our social relations. It will appear in our meekness, humility and equanimity of temper. It will repress those sallies of passions which agitate the wicked. It will make us true and just in all our dealings, hurting nobody by word or deed, loving our neighbors as ourselves, and doing unto others as we would they should do unto us. It will bridle our tongues, and make us circumspect in all our deportment. Under the influence of its grace, and of its awful responsibilities, we shall carefully "abstain from all appearance of evil." They who know not religion by a personal experience, are apt to judge of its character, by its influence upon those who profess it; and when they see it having no such influence as is ascribed to it, they pronounce it a fallacy, and harden themselves in infidelity and in crime. Unwise as such a conclusion certainly is, it has force enough to shew the importance of our walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. For, on the other hand, nothing so powerfully recommends religion to the favorable acceptance of mankind, as its faithful delineation in a pious and exemplary life. "Ye are the epistle of God," says the apostle, "read and known of all men." Many there are who will not read the Bible, but they cannot shut their eyes against the light of a holy life. As therefore so much depends upon our conduct in this view, how careful should we be,

"to let our light so shine before men, that they seeing our good works may glorify God."

3. We owe solemn duties to our families. God has entrusted them to our care; to us they look for example and instruction, and the manner in which we acquit ourselves therein, will materially affect the question of our destiny; when God shall judge the world in righteousness. In order to our faithful discharge of this trust, there is no means so important as family prayer. Nothing will be so likely, under the divine blessing, to impress the hearts of children and of servants with religious sentiments, and nothing will tend more to make heads of families circumspect, than the constant practice of this duty:—And nothing will more certainly attract the blessing of God. His curse is said to be upon those inhabitants which call not upon his name; but his blessing is upon the tabernacle of the righteous. Upon his blessing, our success in all our undertakings, and our happiness here and hereafter, essentially depend. How small a proportion of our time would be half an hour, morning and evening, spent in instructing and praying with our families; but who can tell the advantage it would bestow, in composing the animosities, smoothing the irritations, giving patience under the trials, and in inspiring peace and contentment under all the calamities of domestic life? Be persuaded to begin this year, of which you know not that you shall see the end, by setting up the worship of God in your family. The injunction of the Prophet addresses you with equal force, and is urged by the same decree which went forth against Hezekiah: "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live."

4. The right performance of every duty must have its foundation in a *right* state of the heart. All these commandments we may keep from

our youth up, and yet *lack one thing*. We owe a duty to ourselves, and that is, to obtain peace with God through Jesus Christ. This is effected by faith, which, while it justifies us before him, purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world.—"Examine yourselves if ye be in this faith." Without it, all our doings are nothing worth, and we are only as the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal. Be not satisfied with any thing less than a scriptural evidence, that you are individually interested in the salvation by Christ. This is best known by your love to him, your delight in his service, your love to all mankind, your hatred of sin, and your habitual dominion over your evil propensities. Possessing those evidences that you are united to Christ by a living faith, you need not fear, though death should blast the rising year. Your victory is secured by him who has gone before you through those dreary wilds, who has despoiled it of all its terrors, and planted the fruits of paradise in the valley of death's shade. Animated by his promises, and comforted by his presence, you sing in triumph, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory?"

Let us animate ourselves to the performance of these duties, and to the attainment of these dispositions by the considerations that lie before us. It is a solemn reflection that many who now see the beginning, will never see the end of this year. Long before it closes, many who are now robust and vigorous will be numbered with the dead. The silver cord will be loosed, the golden bowl broken, and the spirit will have returned to God who gave it. Have we not known some, who a year since, like us trod the buisny stage of life, like us took deep interests in the affairs of time, and who, for the sake of those objects which death had already appraised and pronounced unprofitable,

put off from day to day, and from year to year, the vast concerns of their eternal state? But where are they now? Their place knows them no more. "Their days are past, their purposes are broken off; even the thoughts of their heart." And who knows, but before this year has revolved its course, the decree may go forth against thee: "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?"

Even amidst the licentious worship of the ancients, it was common on occasions which recurred but seldom, to pronounce by the plaintive cry of the herald. "Come to those solemnities which no living eye hath seen, and which no eye will see again."—But, entering upon this solemn epoch of our time, we require no herald to announce to us this truth, or to tell us we must die. The pains and diseases of our nature, the revolution of years, the desolations of winter which now sigh in the hollow winds of the year—the still but solemn voice which issues from the tomb of our departed friends—these shew us the instability of that world in which we live, and which by the voice of all its elements preaches the general doom—They cry aloud; and mingling with that voice which comes from heaven, call us to seek our refuge in "him, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning."

That we may all obtain this blessing, is the earnest prayer of

Your affectionate Pastor,
WILLIAM H. WILMER.

From the Religious Remembrancer.
BISHOP HOBART'S ADDRESS,
To the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the Diocese of New-York, containing a View of the state of that Church, during the past year.

My Clerical and Lay Brethren—

Agreeably to the requisition of the Canons, I lay before the Convention the proceedings in this Diocese, since

the last Annual Convention.

Since that time the following persons have received Holy Orders: Gregory T. Bedell, William Hawley, William H. Hart, Abiel Carter, of this Diocese, and William Joseph Buckley, of the Diocese of Connecticut, have been admitted to the Order of Deacons; and the following Deacons, David Huntington, Eli Wheeler, Benjamin T. Onderdonk, and Alanson W. Welton, of this Diocese, and Lewis P. Bayard, of New Jersey, to the Order of Priests. The ordination of Lewis P. Bayard and Benjamin T. Onderdonk, took place in Newark, New Jersey, where I was invited to hold an ordination, by the Standing Committee of that Diocese.

The Rev. Charles Seabury has been instituted to the Rectorship of Caroline Church, Setauket; and the Rev. Eli Wheeler to the Rectorship of St. John's Church, Johnstown.

The Rev. William Hawley and the Rev. William H. Hart have removed to the Diocese of Virginia. The Rev. Gregory T. Bedell, Deacon, has been elected Minister of Christ Church, Hudson; and the Rev. Abiel Carter, Deacon, acts as an Assistant in Christ Church, in this City. The Rev. Ezekiel G. Geer, Deacon, has removed from the Diocese of Connecticut into this Diocese, and acts as a Missionary.

In regard to the affairs of the Diocese, it is proper I should state, that the sentence of suspension on the Rev. Cave Jones, in consequence of his refusing to submit to the requisition of Bishop Moore and his Presbyters, to relinquish his title to the office of Assistant Minister of Trinity Church, was removed, on his submitting to the terms of their requisitions, and an official instrument of the removal transmitted to him.

In the City of New-York, St. George's Church, which was destroyed by fire, has been rebuilt, and is ready for consecration. But we have

to lament the recent destruction, by fire, of the edifice of Zion Church.— This event is calculated to excite peculiar sensibility, from the very limited means which the congregation possess of repairing their loss, there being among them few individuals of much wealth. The corporation of Trinity Church do not possess the means of aiding them to any considerable amount; and their only resource, therefore, is the benevolence of individual Episcopalians. It is not to be supposed that this, their only hope, will fail them; that Episcopalians will refuse to aid a sister congregation in circumstances of peculiar distress; or that they will incur the stigma of making no efforts to raise from its ashes, one of the temples of their God; to reinstate their exiled brethern in those sacred courts where they rejoiced to worship; and to comfort the heart and strengthen the hands of the exemplary and respectable servant of the altar who now mourns its desolation and ruin.

The Right Reverend Bishop Provoost has very recently departed this life. To the benevolence and urbanity that marked all his intercourse with his Clergy, and indeed every social relation, there is strong and universal testimony. And with respect to the manner that marked his official intercourse, there can be no testimony more interesting than that of the venerable Bishop of our Church in Pennsylvania, who, on a public occasion, several years since, referring to the intimate relation between himself and Bishop Provoost, introduced the sentiment, that "delegation to the same civil office is a ground on which benevolence and friendly offices may be expected;" and then remarked, "how much more sacred is a relation between two persons, who, under the appointment of a Christian Church, had been successfully engaged together in obtaining for it the succession to the apostolic office of

the Episcopacy; who, in the subsequent exercise of that Episcopacy, had jointly laboured in all the ecclesiastical business which has occurred among us; and who, through the whole of it, never knew a word, or even a sensation, tending to personal dissatisfaction or disunion."*

In the month of November last, I visited the congregations at Bedford and North-Salem, in Westchester county; and also, a small congregation of Episcopalians in Franklin, in Putnam county.

In the months of June and July, I made the following visitations: St. James's Church, Newton, and administered confirmation to 41 persons; St. George's Church, Flushing, administered confirmation to 15 persons, and admitted William J. Bulkley to the order of Deacon; Christ Church, Stratford, Connecticut, at the request of the Standing Committee of that Diocese, and administered confirmation to 130 persons; Trinity Church, Trumbull, in the same Diocese, and administered confirmation to 30 persons; Christ Church, Rye, Westchester county, and administered confirmation to 12 persons; St. Peter's Church, Albany, confirmed 60 persons; Charlton, Saratogo county, confirmed 24 persons; St. John's Church, Johnstown, Montgomery county, confirmed 10 persons, and instituted the Rev. Mr. Wheeler; Christ Church, Balltown, confirmed 3 persons; the congregations at Balltown, Spa and Milton, and at the latter place, confirmed 13 persons; Trinity Church, Fishkill, and confirmed 17 persons.

In the month of August, and part of September, I visited the following congregations, principally in the Western District of the State: Utica and Paris, Oneida county; Fairfield, Herkimer county; Manlius, Onondaga county; Tully Flatts, Cortland

* Bishop White, in his Sermon at the consecration of Bishop Moore.

county; Auburn, Cayuga county; Clifton Springs, Geneva, Victor, Richmond, (formerly Honeyoye,) Avon, Pultneyville, and Canandaigua Ontario county; Sheldon and Batavia, both near the western frontier, Genesee county. In the principal part of these congregations, confirmations were held; and since the last Convention, the whole number of persons confirmed is about 400.

At my visitation of the congregation at Manlius, the Church in that village, which is a very neat and commodious building, was consecrated by the name of Christ Church, and 41 persons were confirmed. The congregation is increasing, and owes much to the labours of the Rev. William A. Clark. There are two other churches ready for consecration in Rensselaerville, Albany county, and in Stamford, Delaware county, which I expect shortly to consecrate; and it gives me great pleasure to state, that congregations, in various other parts of the Diocese, are erecting Churches. In this pious work, and in general to the support of the Ministry, many of the congregations in the country, and especially in its more remote districts, display a zeal which is worthy of high commendation. There have been instances of individuals, possessing only moderate wealth, who have given the tenth, and the eighth part of their property to the building of Churches, besides liberal contributions, in the same proportion, to the support of the Clergy. The congregations of our Church, it should be recollected, in the new settlements particularly, are not large; and, therefore, the erection of buildings, and the support of public worship, fall heavily upon them. But for the aid they received from other quarters, and particularly, as it respects the support of Clergymen, from the Missionary Fund, and scattered Episcopals in many parts of the State, would have been unable to establish

congregations, and to obtain permanently the worship of our Church.—I mention these facts, in order to excite their more wealthy and favoured brethren, particularly in the cities from the example of their liberality, to contribute, in generous proportion to the means with which Providence has blessed them, to the diffusion and support of that Gospel which is the only security for man's happiness in this life, and his only pledge of felicity in the life which is to come.

It affords me the highest gratification to bear testimony to the zeal and to the fidelity of my brethren of the Clergy in the discharge of their duties. In many places, particularly in the more distant parts of the State, and where the scene of ministerial duty is much extended, it is not to be discharged but with much self denying and laborious exertion. But, in the older and more compact congregations, I have every reason to believe, that there is no failure of exertion and diligence on the part of the Clergy, in the oversight of the flock committed to their charge. I cannot avoid mentioning the exertions of a young brother in the Ministry at Fishkill, who, while in the capacity of a Lay Reader in that place, was very instrumental in exciting the piety and zeal of the people, and whose labours, since his admission to Deacon's Orders, have been very diligent and persevering, and followed by much good.

I ought not to omit to mention, that the congregation at Johnstown have repaired and beautified their house of worship, which is a large stone edifice, erected before the American Revolution, in what was then considered a frontier settlement. Under the very active labours of their present Minister, there is every prospect of the increase and prosperity of the congregation.

An opportunity presented itself of attempting to extend the blessings of

religious instruction among the Indian tribes, through the instrumentality of Mr. Eleazar Williams, who was born among them, and has been liberally educated. He is employed by the Missionary Committee, as a Catechist and Schoolmaster among them. An appeal was made to Episcopalians for their contributions towards the publishing of portions of the Bible, and the Common Prayer in the language of the Indian tribes. The money collected is placed in the hands of G. H. Van Wageningen, Esq. the Treasurer of this Convention, subject to my order, for the above purposes; and Mr. Williams is engaged in preparing the portions of Scripture and the Liturgy for publication.

The Missionaries continue, as usual, faithful and diligent in their important work.

It is impossible to appreciate too highly the importance of Missionary exertions. I visited, for the second time, this summer, the Missionary District to the westward, extending from Manlius on the east, to Sheldon, about 25 miles from Lake Erie, on the west; and from Catharine town, Tioga County, on the south, to Pultneyville, on Lake Ontario, on the north. This district, comprising a circumference of country more than a hundred miles in diameter, was the scene of the Missionary labours of our deceased brother, the Rev. Dr. Phelps. To him succeeded the Rev. William A. Clark, and the Rev. Orin Clark; and, more recently, the Rev. Alanson W. Welton; whose first labours, in their ministry, were devoted to this district, with the same piety, prudence, and laborious zeal which distinguished their venerable predecessor. In this district, in which, fifteen years since, it is believed there was not one congregation of our Church which could be considered as permanently established, there are now 14 or 15, which have fair pros-

pects of permanency and prosperity.— Indeed, such is the ardent and zealous attachment of the Episcopalians scattered through that country, to the doctrine, the ministry, and the worship of our Church; and such the increasing estimation in which these, in proportion as they are known, are regarded by others, that we only want a greater number of Missionaries, in order to ensure the increase and establishment of our Church in various parts of the State. As a most important auxiliary to this object, must be considered the distribution of Prayer-books. The Clergy and Missionaries are uniform in the declaration, that they find no method of increasing our Church more effectual than the distribution of the Book of Common Prayer. It gives me, therefore, great pleasure to notice the increase of Bible and Common Prayer-book Societies in this State. In addition to those in New-York and Albany, there have been recently established Bible and Common Prayer-book Societies on Long Island, in Dutchess county, and in Columbia and Greene counties; in the institution of which, many distinguished Laymen of our Church have cordially co-operated. In common, with my brethern of the clergy, I feel it a duty to acknowledge how much we owe, on various occasions, to the zealous co-operation of our brethern of the laity; and to notice, with the highest pleasure, their increasing zeal for the advancement of the interests of our Church. An evidence of this is to be found in their attendance at these Annual Conventions; one great object of which is, by bringing together, at stated periods, the clergy and the laity, from various parts of the State, to strengthen the bonds of union among the members of our Church, and mutually to animate and to direct their zeal in her cause, and their exertions for her increase and prosperity. May these exertions be

attended with the blessings of Almighty God.*

JOHN HENRY HOBART.

* In enumerating the Bible and Common Prayer-book Societies, in the above address, there is an inadvertant omission of the "Auxiliary Bible and Common Prayer-book Society of the Western District."

Extract of a letter from Fredericksburgh.

"The work of God is still progressing among us, but the visitation is now like the scattered drops which succeed the more copious shower;—however these are pleasing evidences to us that God hath not deserted us. O that we might again, witness a great ingathering of souls, when we shall see sinners flocking home to Jesus as doves to their windows, when the spirit of our God shall be poured out as floods upon the dry ground.

The Saviour has indeed redeemed this part of his possession from its low estate—He has gained honor for himself by his great achievements here."

Oh that this work might extend to our valley and pervade each portion of it until every wilderness heart blossom like the rose—Until every desert soul rejoice in the light of Jehovah's countenance—be adorned with the graces of the gospel of our God.

Christians! if you desire such an hour, you must pray for its advent.

They who ASK, receive.—They who SEEK, find.

A friend from below writes us—

"Twelve months since, such a revival was little expected. Such was the pestiferous influence of that terrific monster *vice*, that it was ever on the alert to extirpate the first germs of virtue or religion.—May your flock daily increase, and may many

be brought, thro' the influence of the Divine Spirit, to hunger and thirst after eternal life, thro' the atoning blood of a Saviour, and diligently to use the means to find *the way, the truth and the life*, which is so fully revealed in the Gospel."

From Leesburgh we learn—

"It has pleased God to visit us with a gradual revival. Phoenix like, the church is now rising from its ruins."

"The Church was consecrated by the Bishop before a crowded congregation. He caused a prodigious "shaking among the dry bones," in this place of every denomination.—Had our good Pastor received timely notice of his visit, we should have had a large number for confirmation, but he came so unexpected that the people were not generally apprised of it. Forty persons received the solemn rite."

NEW HAVEN, (Con) Dec. 16.

New Stone Church.—On Wednesday last the pews in the new Episcopal Church in this city, were sold at auction, on a lease of five years.

This noble edifice, (which is not yet entirely finished) is estimated to cost about \$30,000. It contains 224 pews, of which number 41 are reserved to the society, leaving 183 to be disposed of. The sale of these (for the above named term) produced an annual rent of \$2,775, over and beyond which, the premium bid for choice, produced the sum of \$4,621. As this latter sum is paid upon entering upon the lease, it results that the aggregate produce is equal to the interest of \$66,600, being considerably more than twice the cost of the church.

PRINTED BY
JOHN ALBURTIS,
Martinsburgh, Virginia.